



House Bill ⁷/₈ Montana Legislature 2011
before the Subcommittee on Long Range Planning

**THOMAS CREEK PLACER SURFACE FLOW ENHANCEMENT AND
STREAM STABILIZATION PROJECT
Meagher County, Montana**

A Project Sponsored by the Meagher County Conservation District

Cooperators:

Matt Kmon, Landowner
Meagher County Weed District
Helena National Forest

Supporters:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

January, 2011

For More Information: Meagher County Conservation District at (406) 547 - 3521



MEAGHER COUNTY WEED DISTRICT Jan 21, 2011
P. O. Box 309
White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645

RE: House Bill 8 – Testimony in Support of the Thomas Creek Placer Surface Flow Enhancement and Stream Stabilization Project submitted by the Meagher County Conservation District, Before Montana Legislature 2011, Joint Appropriation Subcommittee on Long Range Planning

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Joint Appropriation Subcommittee on Long Range Planning:

The Meagher County Conservation District has agreed to sponsor the application to the DNRC Reclamation Development Grants Program for the Thomas Creek project because the program supports the mission of the MCCD by conserving and restoring streams and water in Meagher County.

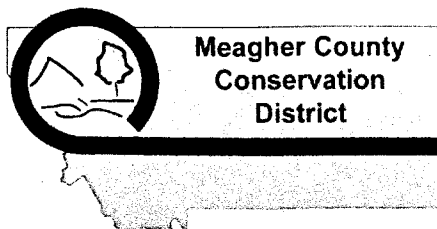
As the Meagher County Weed District Supervisor I am also a member of the Meagher County Conservation District. The Meagher County Weed District also supports the Thomas Creek restoration. Not only will the project restore the flows to Thomas Creek, but it will also return the streambed to a more natural channel, complete with a healthy riparian area for wildlife. Due to the 'raw', exposed banks characteristic of the hydraulic mining used in the area, the area is susceptible to invasion of noxious weeds. As such, spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, Houndstongue and Musk Thistle have invaded the area.

The proposed reclamation project will restore the natural vegetation to the area which will help resist noxious weeds. The restored riparian area will permit an integrated approach to noxious weed control and management.

We would ask your consideration for this project and the benefits that it would have to both the landowner and others who enjoy Meagher Counties vast resources.

Sincerely,

Otto W. Ohlson, Meagher County Weed Supervisor



4147 U.S. Highway 12 • P.O. Box 589
White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645

Phone: 406-547-3633, Ext. 5 Fax: 406-547-3912

January 19, 2011

Re: House Bill 8 - Testimony in Support of the Thomas Creek Placer Surface Flow Enhancement and Stream Stabilization Project submitted by the Meagher County Conservation District, Before the Montana Legislature 2011, Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long Range Planning

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long Range Planning:

The Meagher County Conservation District agreed to sponsor the application to the DNRC Reclamation Development Grants Program for the Thomas Creek project because this project supports our mission of conserving and restoring streams and water in Meagher County. We understand that this project has the potential to restore surface flow connectivity between a dry reach of Thomas Creek and the Smith River which is one of the most important drainages in Meagher County for agriculture, recreation and fisheries. Thomas Creek was heavily mined using placer mining methods from prior to the turn of the century through the 1930's.

Our particular interest in this project is that its' objectives include restoring surface flow, stabilizing the floodplain and channel area so that the natural channel can continue to develop, providing for improved access for weed control and stabilizing side slopes so that vegetation can be reestablished. We see this project as providing more knowledge of cost effective methods for reclaiming the numerous other, highly impaired, placer mined drainages on the east side of the Big Belt Mountains.

Of course there is also a short term benefit from this project to the White Sulphur Springs economy as project engineers and construction activity would utilize the services of the community.

Please consider this project and its' benefits to an important stream system in Meagher County. For more information, contact the Meagher County Conservation District at 547-3521.

Sincerely,

/s/Janet Zeig
JANET ZEIG
Chair, Meagher Conservation District



225 Cruse Avenue, Suite D
Helena, MT 59601
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Terry Myhre *Executive Director*
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Tony Murnion
Treasurer

Bob Glassen
Secretary

Ron Mercer
Past President

January 21st, 2011

Re: House Bill 8 –

Testimony in Support of the Thomas Creek Placer Surface Flow Enhancement and Stream Stabilization Project submitted by the Meagher County Conservation District, Before the Montana Legislature 2011, Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long Range Planning

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long Range Planning:

Montana Business Assistance Connection is the Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC) that supports the Helena Region which includes Meagher County and the City of White Sulphur Springs. Within the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Region, enhancement of natural resources and the jobs that relate to that are of great consequence. As of September 2010, the annual average wage in Meagher County was \$23,544. This leaves the community at 69.7% of the State Average of \$33,759, and 51.7% of the National average of \$45,551, with an unemployment rate of 8.6%.

Activities like the Thomas Creek Enhancement and Stabilization Project have a direct significant impact on Main Street Businesses. The Community of White Sulphur Springs has been able to maintain the needed business base to support this type of work. A significant amount of this project could be contracted to local firms, as well as the added income that will be captured by the local retail businesses. Bricks and mortar or in this case earth moving projects add a significant amount of "New" money into the local economy.

Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) sees the restoration of a surface flow of Thomas Creek as a definite step that will improve the highest and best use of property in Meagher County which includes grazing property for cattle. In addition, the physical labor and dollars expended will be a valuable shot in the arm to a community that is struggling with an uncertain future. Because of this MBAC supports the Meagher County Conservation District submittal of the Thomas Creek Placer Surface Flow Enhancement and Stream Stabilization Project.

Terry Myhre, Executive Director